

Statement on Senate Passage of Appropriations Legislation January 22, 2004

I am pleased that the Senate has passed the omnibus budget bill, which fulfills important commitments like AIDS relief, education and DC school choice, veterans health care, law enforcement, and other priorities.

This bill stays within the spending limits I proposed, which is necessary as we work

to cut the deficit in half over the next 5 years. I will continue to work with the Congress to focus on priorities, cut wasteful spending, and be wise with the people's money. I look forward to signing this bill into law.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Continued Operations of United States Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina January 22, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

In my report to the Congress of July 22, 2003, I provided information on the deployment of combat-equipped U.S. Armed Forces to Bosnia and Herzegovina and other states in the region in order to participate in and support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led Stabilization Force (SFOR). The SFOR began its mission and assumed authority from the NATO-led Implementation Force on December 20, 1996. I am providing this supplemental report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), to help ensure that the Congress is kept fully informed on continued U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia.

The U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to continue SFOR for a period of 12 months in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1491 of July 11, 2003. The mission of SFOR is to provide a focused military presence in order to deter hostilities, stabilize and consolidate the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, contribute to a secure environment, and provide, within its means and capabilities, se-

lective support to key tasks and key civil implementation organizations.

The U.S. force contribution to SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina is approximately 1,800 personnel. United States personnel comprise approximately 15 percent of the total SFOR force of approximately 12,000 personnel. During the second half of 2003, 14 NATO nations and 11 others provided military personnel or other support to SFOR. Most U.S. forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina are assigned to Multinational Brigade, North, headquartered near the city of Tuzla. The U.S. forces continue to support SFOR efforts to apprehend persons indicted for war crimes and to conduct counterterrorism operations. In the last 6 months, U.S. forces have not sustained any combat-related fatalities.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in these operations pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed about developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I will continue to consult

closely with the Congress regarding our efforts to foster peace and stability in the former Yugoslavia.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors January 23, 2004

Thanks for your kind words, Big Jim. [Laughter] I've known him for quite a while, and he's an honorable man who's doing a fine job for the mayors. And I appreciate you all giving me a chance to come by and visit. I've got some thoughts I'd like to share with you about how we can work together to make this country hopeful and safe and secure.

I want to, first, thank you for serving your communities. It's not easy to be a mayor. Probably a lot harder than being a President. After all, I don't have to fill potholes—[laughter]—or empty the trash. [Laughter] But I do really want to thank you. This country is a fabulous country because we've got good, honorable people who are willing to serve at all levels of government. And one of the key levels of government, of course, is running the city hall, and you're doing a fine job. And I look forward to working with you, and so does my administration.

I do want to thank you all for the invitation. I want to thank Mayor Plusquellic, who's going to be chairman next year. Is that done? Yes—okay, good. I didn't want to jump the gun. [Laughter] I look forward to working with you. Mayor O'Neill, thank you very much for having me.

Mayor Riley, it's good to see you, sir. You reminded me, my mother went to high school in the town he runs in South Carolina, and I reminded him that she graduated—[laughter]—like her son, barely.

Speaking about sons, there's nothing wrong with a guy following in his father's

footsteps. In this case, this guy is doing it really well. Mayor Daley, I appreciate you. Great mayor.

I appreciate my temporary Mayor, Mayor Williams. He's a really good guy. He's the Mayor of Washington, DC. I notice you were over lobbying Laura the other day to handle a project. [Laughter] He knows where the power is in the White House. [Laughter] I appreciate you, Tony. He's a good fellow. We worked hard on an interesting education initiative. He took a bold leadership position on education, and we worked with the Congress to get some scholarship money to poor students in Washington, DC, who are going to schools that are failing, that will help liberate them and their parents to be able to choose new schools. And this is a landmark piece of legislation that's going to change people's lives for the better. And the Mayor showed strong leadership. He got out on front on a tough issue, and as a result, the children of this city are going to benefit. And I appreciate you, Mayor, a lot for taking that on.

I want to thank the mayors who are here from Texas. Yes. Behave yourselves. [Laughter] Go to bed early. [Laughter] Don't whoop and holler. [Laughter] But I'm glad you're here. I miss my home State. I love Texas. I love the people who represent our State, and thanks for coming today.

I also want to thank Pat McCrory for meeting me. You might remember he is the mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina. We